

# "THE CENTURY GUILD HOBBY HORSE."

The aim of the Century Guild is to render all branches of Art the sphere, no longer of the tradesman, but of the artist. It would restore building, decoration, glass-painting, pottery, wood-carving, and metalwork to their rightful place beside painting and sculpture. By so placing them they would be once more regarded as legitimate and honourable expressions of the artistic spirit, and would stand in their true relation not only to sculpture and painting but to the drama, to music, and to literature.

In other words, the Century Guild seeks to emphasize the *Unity of Art*; and by thus dignifying Art in all its forms, it hopes to make it living, a thing of our own century, and of the people.

In the Hobby Horse, the Guild will provide a means of expression

for these aims, and for other serious thoughts about Art.

The matter of the Hobby Horse will deal, chiefly, with the practical application of Art to life; but it will also contain illustrations and poems, as well as literary and biographical essays.

All communications to be addressed to the Editor, care of

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## HORATIAN ECHO.

(To An Ambitious Friend.)

Omit, omit, my simple friend,
Still to enquire how parties tend,
Or what we fix with foreign powers.
If France and we are really friends,
And what the Russian Czar intends,
Is no concern of ours.

Us not the daily quickening race
Of the invading populace
Shall draw to swell that shouldering herd.
Mourn will we not your closing hour,
Ye imbeciles in present power,
Doom'd, pompous, and absurd!

And let us bear, that they debate
Of all the engine-work of state,
Of commerce, laws, and policy,
The secrets of the world's machine,
And what the rights of man may mean,
With readier tongue than we.

Only, that with no finer art

They cloak the troubles of the heart
With pleasant smile, let us take care;
Nor with a lighter hand dispose
Fresh garlands of this dewy rose,
To crown Eugenia's hair.

Of little threads our life is spun,
And he spins ill, who misses one.
But is thy fair Eugenia cold?
Yet Helen had an equal grace,
And Juliet's was as fair a face,
And now their years are told.

The day approaches, when we must
Be crumbling bones and windy dust;
And scorn us as our mistress may,
Her beauty will no better be
Than the poor face she slights in thee,
When dawns that day, that day.

1847.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.



#### WICLIF:

#### AN HISTORICAL DRAMA.

OME little time ago I was walking down the famous High Street of Oxford, and wondering how I should compose an article for the July Hobby Horse. My uncertainty was not caused altogether by the want of a subject; but, as it is my duty to notice current literature, I hardly knew where to meet with a recent book which would afford me a pretext for saying what I wanted. By good luck my eyes fell upon a small volume, lying in Mr. Thornton's window, which bore the name that heads this article: "Wiclif, An Historical Drama." The title attracted me, I went in, bought the volume, and read it; and I am reviewing it now because it has enabled me to introduce the subject about which I desired to speak.

This drama is anonymous, an advertisement on the fly-leaf states that it is by the author of "Bertha"; a statement which, to me at least, conveys no light, since I have not had the privilege of reading "Bertha." On the binding there is the design of an outstretched sail upon a rolling sea; there is a Dedication which implies that the writer was at school within walking distance of Lutterworth: beyond this there is nothing to identify him. But the book is published here in Oxford; and from the style, the form, and the treatment of the subject, I gather that the anonymous author is very far from the maturity of his powers. This assumption induces me to speak more

frankly of his work than I should otherwise feel justified in doing; for I am bound to add that though I look forward with hopeful confidence to his future achievements, I do not think too highly of his actual performance.

The drama covers a period of ten years, from 1374—1384; this of itself is, perhaps, somewhat against its effectiveness, and against its acting capabilities. It begins with Wiclif's entrance upon political life, it treats of his various persecutions by the ecclesiastical authorities, and it ends with his sudden death at Lutterworth. The important events of the peasants' rising, and of their rebellion under Wat Tyler in 1381, are mentioned only as an incident; and the very unimportant close of Wicklif's life, in 1384, is made the climax of the play. I would suggest to the author that by following this construction he has missed his opportunity; for surely the most dramatic episode in Wiclif's career was when his theories were wildly and violently worked out in practice by disciples whose logical enthusiasm he was anxious to disown. This has been the fate of innumerable reformers, of Luther, for instance, of the chiefs of the Long Parliament, of the French Encyclopædists; and the sight of misguided, tempestuous zeal outrunning all discretion must be more bitter, to a true reformer, than any persecution. The play, thus, to my mind, falls a little flat.

In addition to this general weakness of structure and conception, the last fourteen lines of the first Act are formed into one of those irregular, illegitimate cadences which, in these slovenly days of ours, are miscalled Sonnets; as if any chance arrangement of fourteen lines had the right to assume that severe, that most artistic and exclusive designation. The success of this experiment does not justify its existence, and will not, I hope, encourage its repetition.

To relieve his play, the author has invented a flirtation between an imaginary niece of Wiclif and a young priest who is one of his most eager disciples. This love-story is the freshest and pleasantest part of the drama; but, however pleasing it may be in itself, I doubt very much whether such a courtship would have been approved by Wiclif, or whether the public opinion of the fourteenth century would have tolerated so unconventional a romance. I have less doubt when I inform the author that Mass was not celebrated in the evening, during the middle ages: whatever the custom may have been in the Apostolic century; and that the service of Benediction was wholly unknown, in England at least, in the orthodox days before the Reformation. It is, perhaps, an excusable mistake to speak of the "Five Mendicant Orders," in Wiclif's time; though I believe that the Servites were not legally recognized, as the fifth order of Friars, until the next century; and, in any case, they had no house in England until quite modern times. It is somewhat peculiar to describe the Bishop of London as "the Bishop of Saint Paul's"; and it is hardly correct to speak of mendicant monks, though in this perversion of terms the author is countenanced by no less an authority than Prescott: for he talks about "Benedictine Friars." By an error which surely must be the printer's, and not the author's, John of Gaunt is twice made to speak of Edward III. as his "brother."

In his Preface, too, the author states that :—" Wiclif stands at the commencement of the introduction of the Reformative Principle into England, whose (sic) history began for us in 1066"; and :—" With Wiclif, as from a water-spring on the mountain side, began that stream of English liberty which ever widening and widening supports us and is our life now." The "Reformative Principle" which was introduced in 1066 was not what is usually meant when those terms

are employed. The Norman Conquest introduced a most necessary reformation of discipline into the English Church; but, so far from introducing Reform in the Protestant sense, it led to the complete feudalization of the Church, and to an immense development of Papal interference and usurpation. While "the stream of English liberty" is a little more ancient than the century of Wiclif; indeed, after the reign of Edward I., instead of "ever widening," it flows with increasing confinement and difficulty till its course is almost choked by the personal sovereignty of the Yorkist kings, and the organized despotism of the Tudors. The teaching of Wiclif, and of the Lollards after him, seems to have had no effect whatever in hindering this political decadence.

I have said a great deal more than I intended in dispraise of "Wiclif"; but I have been tempted to dwell on many of its blemishes because they are not peculiar to this play, or to its author. They are, almost universally, the common property of writers who touch upon the feelings, the customs, and the institutions of the mediæval Church. They are blemishes which exemplify this most important truth; that, except to those who believe in her Infallibility, the Roman Church is the best, indeed the indispensable, mistress of discerning and sympathetic history. We have, in some measure, outgrown the unreal mediævalism of the writers of fifty years ago, who made every third sentence contain an invocation to the Madonna. This affectation pervades the novels of G. P. R. James, there is a trace of it in Lord Tennyson's "Queen Mary," and in parts of "Wiclif" such exclamations are too frequent and obtrusive.

But let me turn now to the positive qualities of our play. To begin with, there are several beautiful lyrics scattered up and down it. The whole cast of the plot is manly and straightforward, there is

no hesitation or obscurity about it. The action never flags, the characters live and are vigorous; and sometimes they utter fine and even prophetical truths: as, for example, when the Archbishop says, speaking of Oxford:—

#### Where learning is, obstruction's sure to lurk.

But I will not quote specimens, or talk about "fine passages;" because one of the most crying evils of our current reviews is that they persist in judging poems, and pictures too, by isolated fragments, instead of regarding them as living organisms, as indivisible artistic existences. On the whole, then, I wish to leave with my readers a good impression of Wiclif. I can honestly advise them to read the play, and still more do I recommend them to watch for the future writings of the "Author of Bertha."

I have been desirous, for some time, to write about a mediæval subject in these pages; because the middle age, on its artistic side, is full of interest and instruction; and it exemplifies, in every branch of art, the success and the necessity of those principles of artistic workmanship which are advocated by the Century Guild. The despised middle age is full of teaching for us all, and more especially for those of us who are artists. But its teaching is not easily learnt; for even now the long period, of widely differing centuries, which we lump together so superficially as the middle age, is comparatively unknown. It is to be hoped that some writer will treat this interesting time as Mr. Symonds has treated the Renaissance. Much would be gained if Mr. Pater would give us a series of studies like his "Denys L'Auxerrois"; for he puts more sympathy and insight into one of his inimitable essays, than a less gifted artist could express in a whole lifetime of authorship.

Wiclif's century is not the one I would have chosen to speak about, but a reviewer must accept his opportunities as they come to him; so I will follow the subject a little farther, and see what we can get out of it, although, in my judgment, the fourteenth century is unsatisfactory and disappointing, in comparison with the three which preceded it. To an artist, the attractive century is the thirteenth; indeed there is no period in English history, except the time of Charles I., which exhibits so much promise as the reign of Henry III. Yet so perverse have we shown ourselves to the Muses, so careless and undiscerning of their gifts, that we have chosen the reigns of our two cultured sovereigns as the best time to enact a couple of tiresome revolutions, by which our finest artistic possibilities were destroyed.

But I must not wander from the fourteenth century. Wiclif, I will keep to the spelling of the drama, was born about 1324; he spent many years of his busy life at Oxford: where, among other offices, he filled that position which its present representative has made the most illustrious in the University; I mean the Mastership of Balliol. He held two livings; first, that of Fillingham in Lincolnshire, and then Lutterworth; he translated the Bible, organized a confraternity of preachers, and wrote numerous works on the social questions of the time. His life thus overlaps the long reign of Edward III. That king lived to celebrate his Jubilee; he reigned for fifty years, from January 1327, to June 1377. The striking events of his reign have no doubt been impressed upon us by Mrs. Markham, and the other authors of those romances for children, which are styled histories of England. Crécy and Poitiers are household names which still have power to thrill English imaginations; the acquisition of Calais, and the adventures of the Black

Prince are familiar to every one; and many of my readers, no doubt, are fortunate enough to have explored the entrancing pages of Froissart. In outward appearance the reign of Edward III. was brilliant and successful. If England was small in extent it had a high spirit, and great enterprises were accomplished. Edward's court was magnificent and splendid. The life of the rich was extraordinarily gay and lavish, even for the gorgeous middle age. The Prelates were more stately, the Religious Orders more numerous, the Church wealthier, than in previous centuries. A new style of architecture came into being, and the monuments which the fourteenth century has handed down to us are impressed with the large and orderly, though somewhat unimaginative, characteristics of their builders. The English speech itself began to assume its modern form; in the hands of Chaucer it acquired a new power of poetical expression; it won its way into the law-courts, it was used in speeches from the throne, and it became the official language of government. But below this outward appearance of prosperity there was a state of terrible suffering; for the whole condition of society was artificial and unjust. Wars and taxation had exhausted the strength, and drained the resources, of the country. The Church was more anxious to preserve its authority than to comfort its humbler children; and the clergy were as eager as the laity to join in the race for wealth. The trade of the country was undergoing a transition; the seasons were bad, and appalling sicknesses devastated the people: especially during the fatal visitation of the Black Death in 1349. It has been estimated that from a third to a half of the entire population was carried off by this pestilence. The labour market was seriously disturbed by the wholesale depopulation; and the misery led to a peasants' rebellion, which was sternly repressed. It was to a

society thus despairing and disorganized that Wiclif and Longland spoke; and as England did not stand alone in its social distress, it is not surprising that dreams of reform were eagerly welcomed throughout Europe.

I have sketched, very slightly, the aspect of only one portion of a single century in that period which we call the middle age; and it is evident how interesting that short time is, how full of incident, and on how many sides it touches human life. And that century is a poor one if we compare it with the thirteenth, or with the twelfth. But the fourteenth century, though it does not afford the artistic examples I was seeking, is one which has a terrible fascination for us; because we, too, have our social problems, our agricultural depressions, our alarming conditions of property, and population, and The confusions of our time are manifold; government seems powerless, and paralysed at its source; the solutions of the Churches do not touch the roots of the disease; instead of words of healing and authority we hear a murmur of conflicting voices. will confess that in one voice only do I hear a tone of encouragement and hope. They come to me in those accents of power and of beauty which have been telling us, for so many years, to learn from Nature, to make art the minister of spirituality and righteousness; to return to the virtues of homeliness, and honesty, and reverence, without which no life, whether individual or national, can be healthy. This voice has spoken nobly and truly of the middle age, and wisely and prophetically of our own: it is the voice of Mr. Ruskin.

We are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

ARTHUR GALTON.





HISS SIDDALL DRAWING ROSSETTI.





# THOUGHTS TOWARDS A CRITICISM OF THE WORKS OF DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

HE latest biographer of Rossetti, if indeed this poet can be said to have had a biographer as yet, speaking of "The Blessed Damozel," remarks: "Nothing in the descriptions recalls any preceding work. In

Protestant literature, at least, it is a thing unheard of in a poem in a sense religious, to find no trace of biblical phraseology." We must needs, I think, have some misgiving as we read the first of these two sentences, whether the originality of the poem really does lie in the descriptions, and whether after all the descriptions do not recall to mention only one name, Coleridge. But when we come to the words, "In Protestant literature," we are indeed fairly taken aback, and ask ourselves if this writer has made any effort to understand the poem he is trying to analyze. And yet this is no unfair specimen of the sort of criticism that Rossetti has, for the most part, hitherto received. But I must rather be obliged, than otherwise, to Mr. Knight, for he could not have given me an initiative fuller of suggestion: "In Protestant literature," and this too of "The Blessed Damozel."

As I was turning over a short time since the thin leaves, with their heavy seventeenth-century type, of the Hesperides and thinking where in English art, till we come to the art of Rossetti, can we find a parallel to Herrick's surprising resource of pictorial detail, where but in Rossetti's pictures is such a profusion of sweet sights and scents as in this old poet, with his April, May, his June and July flowers, his lutes of amber, his harps and viols, his wealth of colour, from the vermilion that the Lady of the Nuptial Song trod upon, to the green silk cord with which the silver bow of the girl in "The Vision" was strung, mixt, as they are, with the odour of spikenard, musk, amber, and those other smells sweet as the vestry of the oracles and "set about" his many dainty mistresses,—as these and a hundred such idle thoughts crowded into my brain, I came upon a poem I seemed previously not to have noticed, a poem that made me exclaim, "Here is 'The Blessed Damozel' of Protestant literature!" But pardon me, Herrick, that I even for a moment should have wronged you thus. How could you, most delightful of Pagans, have held any but the Catholic faith, the one inheritor of Paganism? Happily, moreover, it is against the nature of art for any true artist to lend a word, much less a poem, to a protestant cause. I should have said, "Here is 'The Blessed Damozel' of Catholic literature."

I will give the poem exactly as I found it at page 373 (London, 1648), of the works both human and divine of Robert Herrick.

COMFORT TO A YOUTH THAT HAD LOST HIS LOVE.

What needs complaints, When she a place Has with the race Of Saints?

In endlesse mirth,
She thinks not on
What's said or done
In earth:

She sees no teares, Or any tone Of thy deep grone She heares:

Nor do's she minde, Or think on't now, That ever thou Wast kind.

But chang'd above, She likes not there, As she did here, Thy Love.

Forbeare therefore,
And Lull asleepe
Thy woes and weep
No more.

It is not for any difference of treatment or style that I place this poem side by side with "The Blessed Damozel." Much less do I wish to compare Herrick to Rossetti. It is for one difference, and one alone, that I have taken the trouble to transcribe the lyric, the difference of the opposite attitudes, as shown in these two poems, of the girl in heaven towards her lover on earth. Set the last verse but one of Herrick's "Comfort" against this twenty-second verse of "The Blessed Damozel," and you have my meaning. The Damozel herself is speaking:—

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:—
Only to live as once on earth
With Love,—only to be,
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he."

But of these what shall we say? Of Herrick's Song we can say but one thing, that its ideas are the natural, the only possible ideas proper to the situation of a man nourished in the old faith, the faith But of this new belief of Rossetti? This is a of the Church. question, a question which, as far so I am aware, no writer has yet answered, or even touched upon; a question which I saw at once could only be sufficiently answered by one who had intimately known him. And so, for a time, I went about perplexed and unsatisfied, till a chance passage in a letter from one of Rossetti's earliest friends laid bare to me the meaning of the riddle. It was this: "One of the most startling and inexplicable features in D. G. R.'s mental character, and one underlying all his poetry, is the materialistic nature of his religion in relation to love. This first appears in 'The Blessed Damozel,' who in heaven is only anxious for the advent of her lover, without whom she has no happiness, and with whom, if he would only die and come, she would enjoy herself. When he painted for Mr. Graham the picture from the poem, he made the background of the melancholy Damozel literally filled with young people kissing each other. Read 'The Song of the Bower,' one of the very best things he did in point of metre and beauty of lines, and you will find it to mean this:—How is it now in the bower where I missed my opportunity, and I may never have another chance; and yet when this life is over shall we not meet, and shall I not get her in my arms

'One day when all days are one day to me,'-

a lovely line. I often before his later period argued with him about this singular Islamite doctrine, but it was useless," etc.

This at first sight is, as the writer says, not only inexplicable, but

startling. That Rossetti should have used this view of love merely as a symbol would not have been surprising; but that he should have believed in it as an actual faith, as a further passage which I have omitted confirms, is certainly somewhat inscrutable. Yet if you will look with me into this strange belief still more deeply, much of its inscrutability will wear away, certainly we shall find in it nothing which we need regard with suspicion. Let me begin by dissenting from the writer of the letter in calling this an Islamite doctrine. Truly it differs from the Islamite doctrine but by a very little, yet this very little is the leaven to which the Kingdom of Heaven was likened. It saves that into which it enters.

If we turn to the Koran and read the description of the garden prepared for the Faithful, wherein is heard neither any vain discourse, nor any charge of sin, but only the salutation "Peace! Peace!" we shall find that the devout of Mahomed look not in heaven for the women they loved on earth but for other and strange women, damsels of Paradise by a peculiar creation, made not of clay, as mortal women are, but formed out of pure musk,—unearthly creatures of lust whose beauty shall neither satisfy nor abate the desire of the dwellers in the garden. But how different is this to the creed of Rossetti which holds that hereafter he shall dwell with the very woman he loved on earth, she whose body Love knew not from her soul and in whom Beauty was Genius. 'Tis but the natural sequence of that faith of Blake's, developed out of Swedenborg, which held that man has no soul apart from his body. It is surprising, if you please, but beautiful to the uttermost;—a little while and Dante shall meet Beatrice in heaven and so see fulfilled through eternity all the dreams of the Vita Nuova.

Since it is impossible as yet to determine the "master-current" of

the literature of which Rossetti's was a part, we being in the very midst of the stream in which he himself moved, we must content ourselves in endeavouring to discover the master-current of the man. And to such an end I have followed out, at this length, my analysis of "The Blessed Damozel," because it seems to me at once to show not only what this master-current was, but what is still more valuable, the peculiar temper of it and this too at the very beginning of his life, for excepting "My Sister's Sleep," "The Blessed Damozel" is the earliest poem of his that we are in possession of. His "dominant turn," he being, as his brother says, "in intellect and in temperament a leader," his devotion to his mother, his power of friendship, for the Rossetti of the later period is not to be judged as we would judge him before he became subject to the influence of chloral, the mediæval glamour of his earlier and the Italian atmosphere of his later work, his extreme sumptuousness, his imposing personality, all these are minor currents and not the central power of his life. It was that same biographer of Rossetti from whom I quoted at the beginning of this notice who, being of the number of those that care not "to rake the bowels of Potosi and the regions towards the centre," would have called "The House of Life" the House of Love. Had he been speaking of a poet with the catholicity of thought and sympathy of Chaucer or Milton, this would have been true enough. But with Rossetti it was otherwise. To him there was but one spirit that filled the House of Life, it was the passion of Love.

This then was the master-current of Rossetti's life and work. And now that we have his literary pieces, to all purposes, finally collected, by following the course of this current we shall alone find the way that will lead us to a true understanding of them.

As my intention in the present notice is not to attempt any final

estimate of Rossetti, but only to touch upon those things which seem to me most fundamental to an adequate criticism of him, I will now take the recent collected edition of his works and notice such things as I feel necessary to my end. The first thing that must strike whoever opens these volumes is the admirable taste with which they have been edited. In the memoir, in the notes, in the selection of the new matter, this is always present. Indeed so excellently has the book been done, that there is but one thing which suggests itself This is, if instead of the arbitrary division of the for the better. poems under the present heads of "Principal Poems," "Miscellaneous Poems," etc., Mr. W. M. Rossetti had arranged them, great and small, according to what he believes to be their chronological order, the result would have been a distinct gain to the student of Rossetti. The same arrangement might be suggested in regard to the prose. But one is loth to make suggestions even of this kind, for the book and especially the memoir, coming as they do after volumes not only inadequate but misleading, are assuredly to be accepted as perhaps the most staple and worthy contributions that the literature of Rossetti has yet received. I say especially the Memoir, for unlike certain biographies of him that have appeared, it is restricted to such only of the outward facts of Rossetti's life as are necessary to the complete understanding of his works; nor would it have us believe, as some former writers would persuade us, that these outward facts are the vital facts of his life. Let us not deceive ourselves. If there is any truth in what I have surmised to be the master-current of his existence, then its vital facts must needs be those which lie beyond the veil; and until the cloud of the veil may break a little and allow us to make out the chief lines of the great figure beneath, till then let us most fervently trust that we may have no more entirely

vain things written about him, such as the last few years have poured forth. The promised letters of Rossetti will do a great deal towards this, in helping us to see him as he really is; for a letter, thrown off in a moment, often discovers a man more completely than the most intimate lyric. It is to be hoped that Mr. Watts and Mr. W. M. Rossetti will lose no time in fulfilling their invaluable promise.

But before speaking of the poems themselves, there is yet another point suggested by the Memoir. Among these outward facts of Rossetti's life, the most remarkable and seemingly least possible of analysis was his enormous personality. For us who only know him through his works, this personality has a magic greater than that of any other man of his time. He had the fascination proper to one who is to lead other men, a power of friendship given to few, and above all he had in abundance God's chiefest gift, distinction. All these played great parts in his individuality, and yet they will not account for it. But may we not find some clue in the fact that though he was English by education, his nature was really that of an Italian? I mean in this way:—he was the first, at least since Inigo Iones, to fuse naturally together in one individual the great characters of Italian and English art. I can imagine something of this fusion in Vandyck of Italian and Flemish characteristics contributed not a little to his being spoken of by his contemporaries as the "glory of the world" and such lavishments. It gave to him a glamour and a semblance of more complete originality than he really possessed. This is no longer an added lustre, but rather something to be sought out and understood by an effort. The people of the time of Charles I. saw Vandyck only through this glamour, and he appeared to them greater than he really was; but to us it is different, and we

see him as he is. And so I think it will be with Rossetti. But to pass on to the poems.

"By a general consensus of opinion," we are told, "'The House of Life' has been pronounced Rossetti's greatest literary work." As the sonnets of Rossetti have alone, of all his verse, been imitated to any considerable extent, I suppose we must accept this statement. However, for my part I have not the slightest hesitation in differing from this opinion of the vox populi. Assuredly some few of the sonnets are among the very finest things that he wrote; but just now I wish to consider "The House of Life" as Rossetti himself wished it to be considered; that is, as a poem written in sonnets of which any single sonnet is no more a whole poem than is any single stanza of any other of his poems. Both in the editions of 1870 and 1881, and in his retort "The Stealthy School of Criticism," he insists on the unity of his poem as a "Sonnet-sequence." But the mere fact that no fewer than six sonnets printed separately in the edition of 1870, as having no connection with "The House of Life," were afterwards, without any material alteration, bodily worked into that series of sonnets, on its completion in 1881, would make us doubt the possibility of their being so. To which let me add this further sentence from the same series of letters from which I have already quoted. "To me who knew how miscellaneous they were and how occasional and accidental their composition was, they are no more a sequence than a basket of apples is a sequence of that fruit." This, coming from one who, not only from his knowledge of Rossetti, but also from his own critical power, has a right to speak, seems conclusive. However, 'tis but a shallow reading which discloses that "The House of Life" has no such continuous thread of thought by which these sonnets could be rightly said to be strung together into a sequence.

Again, their over-elaboration renders not a few almost incomprehensible, and when we have made our way through this bewilderment of expression, the thought beneath is often entirely unworthy of the pains. But I would have you distinguish this difficulty of expression from his Italian use of words which is quite another thing, and when used moderately has a peculiar charm and fascination.

But by far the most serious defect I have to bring against this poem is one which applies more or less to all his later work, and one which, I fear, will prove more fatal to their final acceptance When Emerson said that the reason than anything else. why Americans would not enjoy Rossetti's poems was because they were "exotic," he was speaking of the 1870 volume, the greater portion of which was written before 1862, and the marked difference between the poetry written before that date and the poetry written in 1869 and onward did not become fully apparent till the volume "Exotic" admirably and with precision of 1881 was published. expresses the warm Italian air, so different from the keen fresh atmosphere of our northern life, that fills the earlier work of Rossetti, both in poetry and painting. It is exotic, but all the same natural and healthy; it is still

"The breath of Heav'n fresh blowing, pure and sweet."

But in the poetry of 1869 and onward we feel that we are no longer under the open sky, although it was that of an Italian summer, but we are come into a room where the air is imprisoned, and the place choked with the fumes of some frightful narcotic. We rise up from reading these later poems with a distressing sense of weariness and oppression. I know that such Ballads as "The White Ship" and "The King's Tragedy" will be brought forward as a palpable refutation of this opinion; but even in these, I feel, as time goes on and we get farther and farther away from them, this want of true

healthiness will become more and more a barrier against their acceptance into the body of that literature which may be truly said to live. Moreover, in these poems, as in the pictures of this later period, his limitations of thought and sympathy become apparent; and we see the mannerisms of his verse correspond to the distressing colour of his flesh painting, the want of proper care in the drawing, and the entirely conventional form of the hands, lips, and necks in his pictures. A comparison of the "Pandora" of 1871, with the "Bocca Baciata" of 1859, shows from what a height of perfection, from its own point of view, the art of Rossetti had fallen.

And perhaps I must now give my reasons for having thus pointed out even the decadence of a man to whom we owe as much, possibly, as to any other poet of his time. Rossetti is entirely to be read, digested, and admired,—read, digested and admired with discernment; but never to be taken as a model, never to be followed as a master. His Italian nature precludes that we, who are of Northern blood, may do more than imitate him, and imitation invariably means an exaggeration of the worst faults of the original. His best work in its extreme elation and richness of thought and expression often strained the capacity of his art to the utmost; and his later work but too frequently topples over into obscurity. A more dangerous model we could not have, and yet there is a growing tendency among our younger writers not only to imitate him, but to imitate him in his least sound work, his Sonnets.

But if we can look on Rossetti with sober eyes and distinguish his best work from work which is morbid and over-wrought, what a living well of freshness shall we find there; indeed a water poured forth! He did not give us any new thought, or any new criticism of life, or, as Blake, any new attitude towards religion; but he brought a new temper more exalted and more sumptuous, than had been

known before, to the passions of men. In a word, he made a selection of the ideals of Dante, and idealized them. For this we cannot be too thankful, for poems like "Jenny," like "The Blessed Damozel," like a few of his early Songs, and for pictures like "Monna Vanna," and the "Beata Beatrix." But why stay to laud him thus? He is not likely to be wronged by insufficient praise, but rather by too much praise, praise that is indiscriminate.

HERBERT P. HORNE.



### THE "ALCESTIS" AT OXFORD.

HE vernal festival of Dionysus has been appropriately kept at Oxford, where, in the Thargelian month (if the latter half of a very modern English May can lay claim to this title), the Amateur Dramatic Society of

the University produced the "Alcestis" of Euripides: not the least beautiful flower of "the flying blossom of the term."

Such classical revivals are something more than pretty pastimes for undergraduates with a taste for acting. In them scholarship becomes pleasantly vitalized; and they are no less really a part of University training because not formally recognized as such. Several interesting performances of Greek plays have been given in the course of the last decade at Oxford and Cambridge; more frequently, so far, at Cambridge, where the "Ajax" of Sophocles was produced in 1882, the "Birds" of Aristophanes in 1883, and the "Eumenides" of Æschylus in 1886; as also the "Electra" of Sophocles by the ladies of Girton in 1883. Since the production of the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus about ten years ago, no Greek play has, so far as I know, been given at Oxford until this year. The "Œdipus Tyrannus" is to be performed at Cambridge next winter; and it may be hoped that the success which has attended these classical revivals, and the general interest they have excited, may tend to make them annual or biennial in future.

An interesting novelty in the "Eumenides" at Cambridge was

the playing of the part of Athena by a lady, Miss Case, the Electra of Girton—whose admirable delivery of her Greek verse will be remembered by those who heard her; and in the recent performance at Oxford the part of Alcestis was assigned to Miss Harrison, also educated at one of the Ladies' Colleges at Cambridge, and well-known as an accomplished classical scholar.

The "Alcestis" is not altogether new to modern audiences. was produced about seven years ago at Bradfield College, Berks. deserves to be a popular play; for it is perennially fresh, and contains many of those delicate touches which seem so essentially modern in "our Euripides the human." It is also full of that rare dramatic art, of which he almost alone possesses the secret, by which he so frequently succeeds in making a drama with no plot to speak of, and little action, interesting through mere play of character and pathos of situation and language. Euripides is said, indeed, to have introduced plot into the antique drama; but if this really was one of the great innovator's innovations, his rival, Sophocles, must quickly have "bettered his instruction" in this matter. There is no play, at least among the extant works of Euripides, which for artistic handling of a plot, and consummate skill in dramatic construction, can compare with the "Œdipus Tyrannus." He is not a self-conscious constructive artist, like Sophocles; there is in him something of the "wood-note wild" of a Greek Shakespeare. His plays grow like flowers round some sweet primæval childishness of story. There is blood in the words of this man of sorrows, moody and gentle, who knew both triumph and insult, contending often, yet seldom victorious; idolized by one faction, reviled by another, during his lifetime, distancing all competitors for popular favour after his death; and all he has left us lives in the vitalizing atmosphere of poetry.

The substitution of a tragi-comedy like the "Alcestis" for the satyric drama which should canonically have followed a tragic trilogy, was probably one of those novelties introduced by the innovating genius of Euripides; and to its peculiar position in the series may be due that humorous element which appears in the scene of recrimination between Admetus and his father, and in the distinctly comic scene between the servant and Heracles. Both these scenes, Greek as they are in sentiment, have in their dramatic presentation something racy and modern; the former recalling the delicate satiric touch of Molière, the latter the broadly human comedy of Shakespeare. Heracles, the good-natured rollicking demi-god, his heroic divinity breaking through his easy-going and very human enjoyment of the good things of life, at the call of honour, is, one might almost say, a Shakespearean figure of the Prince Hal type.

The plays of Euripides, from the very fact of their departure from the stricter canons of Greek dramatic art, specially lend themselves to these modern revivals, where the characters appear without the conventional tragic mask and buskin; and it seems strange that so far Æschylus and Sophocles have ousted him from representation in the Universities. The "Alcestis" is a capital play to introduce him to a modern audience. It is one of the best known of his works, "dear to pass-men," as the clever Greek prologue, handed round the Oxford Theatre with the programmes, puts it. It is also among the best of his works, in the firm yet delicate drawing of the well-grouped and well-contrasted characters. It has not the tragic intensity of the "Hippolytus," or the terrible over-strained pathos of the "Troades," with that splendid picture at the end, of the plunder-laden Grecian ships launched in the glare of the fires of Troy; it rather approaches the "Iphigeneia in Aulis" in its power to reach

that fountain of sweet tears which lies deeper than the springs of pathos, and which things supremely beautiful alone can reach. The pathos of the "Alcestis" is but the veil of some deeper and more inward beauty. It is here the revealing and concealing drapery of the soul of sacrifice. As a play, it is freer than many from the besetting sins of Euripides, wearisome logomachy and piling of the agony. The sorrow of Admetus is worn a little threadbare, but it is by no means over-pathetic; and the keen encounter of wit between him and Pheres is dramatic all through—every thrust on either side is a fresh revelation of character. And how delicious is this whole scene, so remote from modern sentiment, because so shameless in its outspoken selfishness! It carries us back to those good old times before the grand discovery was made—that words were given us to conceal our thoughts. We may still retain many of our primitive instincts; but we don't express them so naively. Yet underlying its comedy, there is something grim in this meeting between father and son. It is as though Admetus were suddenly brought face to face with himself grown old, like the young man in Lionardo's drawing, as interpreted by Mr. Swinburne. He recoils in disgust, not recognizing that it is himself. Pheres has the best of the argument; but Admetus out-faces him in sheer innocence of egotism. His indignation swoops from loftier, calmer, more Olympian heights of stolid selfishness.

The part of Alcestis, though short, consisting of a few commatic lines, one long speech, some lines of ordinary dialogue, and a dumb appearance at the end of the play, is the most important in the drama. How Euripides came to be regarded as a satirist or slanderer of women, it is hard to understand. If he satirizes either sex, it is surely men who have most reason to complain; for he might almost be

called the dramatist of heroic women and unheroic men. He seems, indeed, to enter into the feelings of women with a rare sympathy; and perhaps it is because he makes his women express the feelings they have, rather than those that men think they ought to have, that he has been set down as their satirist.

Alcestis, though she dies to preserve her husband's life, is the martyr of domestic duty, τὸ πρέπου in the sphere of the social relations, rather than of love. She loves her husband, as Goethe says Hamlet loved Ophelia, "without conspicuous passion." It is wonderful how clearly Euripides has drawn her character in that one long speech, in which she speaks her mind to Admetus with the simplicity and directness so characteristic of these primæval personages. She has done her duty by him, giving her life for his (and there is nothing dearer than life) when she might have lived happily with another husband; let him not dishonour her by setting another woman in her place who will be a cruel stepmother to her children. To this she binds him by a solemn promise before witnesses. She is jealous for her dignity as a wife, and for the happiness of her children, rather than for her place in the heart of Admetus, though there is a touch of bitterness in the thought that he will in time console himself for her loss.

The art with which the *dénouement*, the unveiling of the restored Alcestis, is delayed by the dialogue between Heracles and Admetus is a little too palpable; but there is something fine in the manner in which the veiled figure of the speechless Alcestis is kept in the background, as though not yet an inhabitant of this world—a ghost unknown and unwelcomed at the threshold of the house she has died to save.

The Oxford Theatre lends itself to the stage requirements of Greek drama better than that at Cambridge, where the "Eumenides"

There, owing to the very limited space was performed in 1886. available for the lower stage (ὀρχήστρα), the evolutions of the chorus were much curtailed; and as the difference in level between the upper and lower stages (σκηνή and ὀρχήστρα) was but small, the various movements of the chorus when singing tended to produce occultation of the protagonists, while, when not in motion, the semi-choruses were thrust awkwardly against the side-walls. At Oxford the ordinary stage was produced beyond the footlights, over two or three rows of stalls, the σκηνή being constructed upon it, at such a distance from the place usually occupied by the footlights, that the curtain just concealed the double flight of steps leading from the lower to the upper stage. A space, semi-elliptical in shape, and some twenty-four feet wide by twenty feet from front to rear, was thus left for the chorus. In the centre of this lower stage, about where the footlights usually shine, stood the normal thymele, or altar of Dionysus, with votive offerings of fruit (why not flowers, as more appropriate to the spring season?) disposed around a leaping and flickering flame. The scene represented the entrance to the Palace of Admetus, with glimpses of the plains of Thessaly seen over the battlements at either side. whole arrangement of the theatre was, in fact, very similar to that of Mr. Godwin's Greek theatre at Hengler's last year; the space available at Oxford being, of course, comparatively very small.

To the clever stage management of Mr. Mackinnon, no small part of the success of the piece is due. What he did with his amateur company in the rather brief time at his disposal was really remarkable. Even the first performance went well, and was subsequently improved upon in many details.

A Greek play performed by students of one of our Universities appeals to the sympathetic imagination of a cultured audience. For my

own part I must confess to a real enjoyment of amateur acting, if the amateurs have any dramatic talent, and sufficient training to get rid of the worst crudities of inexperience. It has, as compared with the acting of professionals, something of the advantage of a sketch over a finished picture. You do not expect so much, and your imagination can seize on anything good that is suggested: you can, like James Lee's Wife, "Kiss all right where the drawing fails." Dramatic, like other art, tends to stiffen into dull Academic perfection.

The Oxford company was more than respectable. The Orestes of Mr. Macklin in the Cambridge "Eumenides" was indeed, for that quiet power which seems most appropriate in Greek drama, a more impressive performance than that of any of the gentlemen who took part in the "Alcestis"; but with this exception the acting was better than at Cambridge. The chorus of old men, in particular, besides having more room to move in, were better drilled than the chorus of Furies in the "Eumenides." More general grace of movement in both principals and chorus, and still greater beauty of grouping would no doubt have been attained with more rehearsals.

The opening colloquy between Apollo and Death was admirably given by both performers. Mr. Mackinnon himself played Apollo very gracefully, and spoke his Greek in tuneful scholarly fashion; Mr. Bourchier, as Death, appearing as a weird grey phantom of Renaissance type, in a Wagnerian cloud of steam—an ultra modern innovation which doubtless pleased the shade of Euripides. His mediæval grotesqueness of movement was too melodramatic even for Euripides; but he froze the marrow of "The Dailies." The august shade (not Death, but the shade of Euripides) must have smiled over their columns next morning at the Union.

Mr. Grahame, as Admetus, had a long, difficult and ungrateful

part to play; and his make-up was unbecoming, and without that distinction which should mark the royal protagonist. He has a sympathetic voice, spoke well, and acted well and without exaggeration, distinctly improving in his later performances. In the scene with Pheres he showed to special advantage, towering in the calm dignity of his contemptuous egotism above the more demonstrative Pheres, who, in the very bitterness of his well-justified sarcasm, seemed mean beside him. This racy scene went capitally on both sides; Mr. Marriott, as Pheres, proving himself the prounpos of Mr. Mackinnon's prologue. A little over-doing certain gestures, he yet brought out every point in his part, from his first condolence with Admetus to his angry exit, with remarkable clearness and force—every spiteful thrust told.

The Heracles of Mr. Mason was a very spirited performance, full of rollicking jollity in the comic scenes; forcible when, dashing down and trampling his garland, he assumed the god, and rushed out to snatch Alcestis from the arms of Death; with some touch of that humorous benevolence which should crown the heroism of the Zeusbegotten son of Alcmena in the restoration scene. His representation of the hero "taking his ease in his inn" between labour and labour, and pleasantly warmed with wine, touched the right key; and his good-humoured laughter as, suddenly unveiling Alcestis, he sprang up on the steps behind the re-united pair, was very genial. There was an unfortunate suggestion of Offenbachian comic opera in his red unkempt hair and beard, so unlike the close-curled athletic hair and beard of the statues of Heracles, and in the whitish drawers which, beneath the cumbrously arranged leopard-skin, somehow gave his legs a feebly acrobatic look; but Mr. Mason's acting carried him through triumphantly.

The Maid-Servant of Mr. Davies was, on the other hand, very well made up, and he delivered his long speech solemnly and sonorously; and the old Man-Servant of Mr. Coningsby Disraeli was a good piece of classical low-comedy, thoroughly humorous without vulgarity—but distinctly suggested the slave of the Latin comic stage, not the more primitive Euripidean character.

To be Alcestis—Death's pythoness, speaking from the tripod of her self-devotion—and not merely a dying woman, would tax the powers of a great actress. Miss Harrison has evidently had but little stage experience, yet there was a fine suggestiveness in her performance, and she once or twice struck a true tragic note. Owing chiefly to defective modulation of her voice, which tended to fall into monotonous falsetto, the mere physical weakness of death was overemphasized; but her action was so good as almost to redeem the deficiencies of her elocution, which though undramatic was elegant Her gestures, when she sank into the marble seat and scholarly. with the children beside her—a beautiful group—had a dramatic fitness and a spontaneous grace which left little to be desired. There was a half-savage maternal στοργή in her last embrace of Perimele; and the manner in which she waved back Admetus with the sadly bitter words:

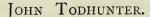
### Χρόνος μαλάξει σ' ουδέν εσθ' ὁ καθανών.

and then bent forward, gloomily gazing into the future wherein she would have no part, was really fine. In the last scene her shrouded figure was quite Sibylline, and there was true tragic expression in the gaze, so sad yet blank, which she fixed upon Admetus, when unveiled.

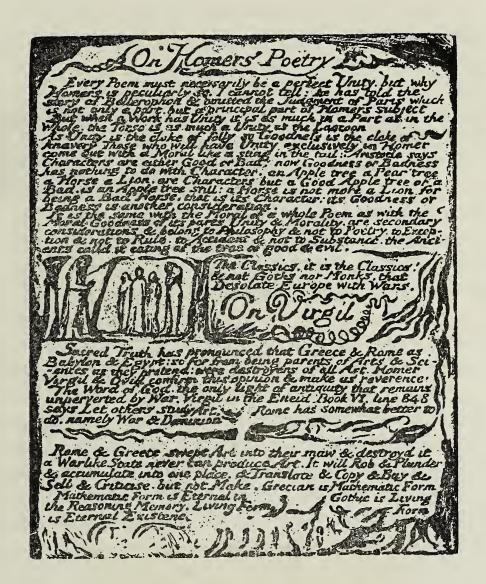
The little boy who played Eumelus, Master Whitelaw, spoke his two short speeches with admirable clearness and fluency, and went through his business with charming precision and insouciance. The dialogues of the chorus, especially that with Heracles, were well given; and the funeral procession, with its funeral march and chant of the chorus, with wailing and tossing of arms, was a fine piece of spectacular pomp, all the evolutions being well executed. The make-up of these old men of Pheræ was rather commonplace in its wigginess and beardiness, and there was a great monotony in their method of wearing the peplos—the colours, too, might have been better harmonized, for beauty of general effect.

It only remains to speak of Mr. Charles Lloyd's music, which was admirable in itself and went well. By very clever and dainty scoring, his two harps and two flutes, with an alternative clarionet, became, under the composer's bâton, a most efficient and sufficient orchestra. The music was always welcome as a relief to the dialogue, and poetized the situations. Owing perhaps to Admetus's not possessing a singing voice, the Kommos between him and the chorus, which ought to have been very effective, was not set. The best numbers were the second chorus,  $\omega \nu \alpha \xi \pi \alpha \iota \dot{\alpha} \nu$ , in which the fine baritone of the Coryphæus, Mr. Phillips, told well in a few bars of solo; and the funeral march and chorus. The beautiful ode to the Mansion of Admetus was not quite so satisfactory in the setting of the words.

On the whole the Oxford Dramatic Society may be congratulated on a decided success.









# BLAKE'S SIBYLLINE LEAF ON HOMER AND VIRGIL.



WING to the demands on our space this quarter, I shall not be able to write as full a note upon the Sibylline Leaf, of which we give a facsimile, as I should otherwise have done.

As to the date of the Leaf, although the water-mark in the original from which our facsimile was made, is dated 1821, yet, I think, the plate itself must have been made many years previously to this. The Sibylline Leaf entitled "The Ghost of Abel" was etched in 1788.

Perhaps the chief source of difficulty in understanding Blake's literary pieces arises from his persistent and entirely indefensible use of common words in a limited and special sense of his own. So when in the present note on Virgil he says: "Grecian is Mathematic form. Mathematic form is eternal in the reasoning memory. Living form is eternal existence, Gothic is living form," he is opposing the words "Greek" and "Gothic" in a limited and special sense of his own. He held that Jupiter "begot on Mnemosyne or Memory the great Muses, which are not inspiration, as the Bible is;" and therefore to him all classic art was formed by the daughters of Memory, that is, produced by the head, while Gothic is "surrounded by the daughters of Inspiration," that is, begotten of the heart. To what extent he carried this special use of the word "Gothic" may be seen from the inscription on his engraving after an old Italian drawing attributed to Michael Angelo, of "Joseph of Arimathæa

among the Rocks of Albion." "This," he adds, "is one of the Gothic Artists who built the Cathedrals in what we call the Dark Ages." In this sense of the word the Bible, equally with his own works, are essentially "Gothic." As nothing, in so short a space, can throw so much light upon the leaf in question as the Preface to the Book of Milton, I cannot do better than give it entire. stolen and perverted writings of Homer and Ovid, of Plato and Cicero, which all men ought to contemn, are set up by artifice against the sublime of the Bible; but when the New Age is at leisure to pronounce, all will be set right, and those grand works of the more ancient and consciously and professedly inspired men, will hold their proper rank; and the daughters of memory shall become the daughters of inspiration. Shakespeare and Milton were both curbed by the general malady and infection from the silly Greek and Latin slaves of the sword. Rouse up, O young men of the New Age! set your foreheads against the ignorant hirelings! For we have hirelings in the camp, the court, and the university; who would, if they could, for ever depress mental, and prolong corporeal war. Painters! on you I call! Sculptors! Architects! suffer not the fashionable fools to depress your powers by the prices they pretend to give for contemptible works or the expensive advertising boasts that they make of such works: believe Christ and His Apostles, that there is a class of men whose whole delight is in destroying. We do not want either Greek or Roman models if we are but just and true to our own imaginations, those worlds of eternity in which we shall live for ever, in Jesus our Lord." Though much of this is but a revolt against the dead classicism of the last century, yet, as Mr. Swinburne points out, it is, in the spirit of it, certainty and truth for all time, notwithstanding in the letter it may read like foolishness.

HERBERT P. HORNE.

## ON DESIGN.

When we sit down to write on any of the nicer questions connected with the Arts, there are two things which very soon become considerably embarrassing: in the first place, Art cannot in the very nature of the case be treated with that logical precision, which is the proper and easy method of the Sciences; and secondly, there is so very much which we must allow to personal predilection. The result is that we are constantly unable to speak with that assured and attractive dogmatism, which the general public hail as the evidence of knowledge and far-sightedness: and the criticism of Art altogether falls into a serious disrepute, when people see, as they will inevitably always see, men, who are equally capable of giving an opinion, differing from one another so gravely as they do in the opinions which they give. What consolation can we offer ourselves in the presence of this distressing difficulty? Perhaps this is as good as any other: we must set ourselves so earnestly upon seeing things as things are in their balanced relation with one another, that we shall have no time for worrying over the reception which our conclusions meet with: and we must avoid, as we would avoid evil itself, talking with that popular but absurd assuredness, with which everything is either black or white, false or true, of the first importance or of no importance at all.

I have been asked to write this little Article or Note in the summer number of the "Hobby Horse" on Design. I may say in starting, that personally there is nothing in Art which has so much attraction and permanent satisfaction for me as this particular element of it. If the Design in a work of Art is interesting I can forgive almost any shortcomings: if the Design is uninteresting, the presence of hardly any excellencies can give me more than a passing thrill of excitement. I believe also that you will find, that in the work of all the greatest artists, who have ever lived, this element of Design is always a powerful one: most patently on the surface it is no doubt in the more abstract presentments of the idealists; but the great naturalists have it too: it is more obvious in the early Italians or Michael Angelo, but, if you look for it, you will find it in reality hardly less in Velasquez.

And what does one mean by Design?

In order to get at a simple answer to this question, we will go with your leave to a popular expression, which is a narrow and misleading expression certainly as are many popular ones, but which will help us, I think, by its very narrowness in clearing our ideas. You know then that it is a common custom to speak about people who invent patterns for wall-papers, or printed stuffs, or embroideries, people who invent shapes

for metal-work or stained-glass or pottery, as *Designers*. They are spoken of under this title, which has in it some tinge of contemptuousness, to distinguish them from the more honourable workers in Architecture, and Sculpture, and the Painting of Pictures. I do not accept this contemptuous phraseology, I can tell you, and so I have said before now in the pages of the "Hobby Horse"; although of course nobody would be ridiculous enough to maintain that Architecture, Sculpture, and Picture-Painting were not of higher importance than the making of paper-patterns and pottery. However we are not at the present moment engaged in fighting this battle: and the popular, but false distinction, to which I am calling your attention, will help us certainly on the point with which we are concerning ourselves.

Now let us take a wall-paper. In a wall-paper then it is quite evident that the thing which is of most importance is the arrangement of its pure lines and its masses in such a relationship with one another, that they produce a whole effect, which is complete; a whole effect, that is, whose unity is so satisfactory, that we have no sense of demanding more or less. In a wall-paper the arrangement of lines and masses is the one radically and prominently necessary thing. We all of us feel that if these are unsatisfactory no other qualities can redeem the matter, not daintiness of colour or draughtsmanship. Now I am sure that in all permanently acceptable Architecture, or Sculpture, or Picture-Painting this exquisite arrangement of lines and masses, simply in themselves, is by no means less necessary, but it is less obviously necessary beyond a doubt; because in these three kinds of Art there are other elements entering as well, which are of such importance and interest, that they conflict with, and even at first sight obscure, the presence of this one. Popular language therefore has unfortunately perhaps, but not unnaturally, come to speak only of those kinds of Art, in which the arrangement of pure lines and masses is the patently necessary element, as Designs: and it is from their consideration therefore that we most readily arrive at a definition of what Design is.

If somebody then asked us, what it is that we mean by Design, we might answer them, I think, more unsatisfactorily than by saying, It is the inventive arrangement of abstract lines and masses in such a relation to one another, that they form an harmonious whole; a whole, that is, towards which each part contributes, and is in such a combination with every other part that the result is a unity of effect, which completely satisfies us.

In this explanation there are two things to which we may for a few moments direct our attention: we say, that Design has to do with abstract lines and masses: we say secondly, that it aims at producing an harmonious whole.

When a man then is designing, (so far indeed as it is possible to select and separate in him many various interests and efforts, which are going on at the same time and with influences on one another), he deals with whatever objects he is concerned in the representation of merely as lines and masses. They are the material, so to say, out of which the interesting lines and masses are to be invented, which will go towards

making his harmonious whole. I would wish to put this quite plainly. It makes no difference to the man, as a designer, whether the object in front of him is a flower, or a shell, or a mountain, or a bird, or a human body. What are the lines it suggests, and the masses? That is everything: whether they form Venus or a toadstool does not at the moment matter: all that matters is abstract line and mass.

Now in the simpler forms of Art-work, such as the decoration of stuffs or pottery, this concern with abstract lines and masses, for their own sakes, is not only obviously the artist's business, but it is also his main business: and this being Design, popular phraseology speaks of him par excellence as the Designer. But he has no exclusive right to the title: nor is this concern of his with Design any the less a concern of those, who in Sculpture or in Painting superadd to it a further concern with other elements of Art. Because you add you do not therefore abolish: because Design is not your mainly important element, it is not necessarily an element absent or unimportant: so far from this being the case, you will find, I believe, as I said to start with, that in the work of all the greatest artists who have ever lived, in Velasquez as well as in Michael Angelo or the early Italians, this element is always a powerful one.

I will not talk merely in generalities about this. I will ask you to take two examples, which occur to me at the moment; the one of them is easily accessible in a photograph, and the other is on the walls of the National Gallery: I mean Michael Angelo's Creation of Eve from the roof of the Sistine, and the mystical picture of Christ at the Column of Scourging, by Velasquez.

Look at these two pictures carefully; cut yourself off from any consideration of their intellectual or emotional interests; make a tracing of their forms in pure outline, and a map of their masses in the relative values of them: and you will find, I make bold to say, an arrangement of pure lines and masses producing an harmonious whole, such as can be beaten in no simple pattern-drawing that ever yet was designed.

Secondly: the lines and the masses of a good design are in themselves separately interesting; but it is the whole effect of them, which at first strikes and then permanently satisfies you, not their individual fineness. The object, that is, of a good designer, is to produce a unity of effect, an harmonious whole, not to produce merely a sequence of charming incidents. In any design therefore in which, when you look at it, you immediately insist upon this incident or upon that, there is something wrong. When you come to analyze it, then you will find that each incident indeed is interesting, and that you could spare none of them without damage to the whole; but, where everything is quite right, it is not till you analyze it that this strikes you: the mountain first of all imposes itself upon you; by-and-bye you take notice of its separate rocks, and of the exquisite flowers that grow round them.

Only one word more. We have heard much in late years of "Schools of Design" up and down the country, from which great things are expected in the development of our National Art. I should be most unwilling to underrate the value of such schools. Nothing can be of more service than to bring students into contact with specimens of

the finest Art, and to teach them truths about it. But let nobody blind us to the fact, that a Designer, like a Poet, is a man, who is born not made one. The true gift of Design is incommunicable. It is in a man as an instinct: and whatever he does, he does almost he knows not how; certainly it is not by any mechanical rules, or conscious application of some fine principles, which have been approved of and settled by Academies. Why does he arrange his lines and masses in this way, or in this? He at all events will probably tell you, "Merely because that is how it best pleases me:" and here indeed we have the truest and the deepest answer that can be given.

SELWYN IMAGE.



# SOME CONTEMPORARY WORK.

O little care is abroad for work which possesses distinction, work which alone can prove finally valuable, that one is ready to believe it a sign of better times when one hears that the Directors of the Manchester Exhibition have employed Mr. Ford Madox Brown to decorate the spandrils of the dome there. When we remember the character of the decoration of our London Exhibitions at South Kensington, the innovation is startling. Hitherto the one quality demanded of the decorator of such buildings was that he should have the genius of making money, but now the Directors of the Manchester Exhibition have suddenly employed a man whose genius is the very opposite one of making beauty beautifully. Perhaps we may next hear of the new sculptures on the reredos of St. Paul's and the North Front of Westminster Abbey being done by a sculptor, like Mr. Thorneycroft, instead of a practical carver; or the painted windows therein by Mr. Burne Jones, in preference to a Church Furnisher. In the meantime we cannot be sufficiently grateful for the discernment and taste the Manchester Directors have shown in their choice. One day we may discover that Mr. Madox Brown has imaginative powers not equalled, perhaps, by more than half a dozen English painters of his time.

This speaking of distinction in work leads us on to draw attention to the landscapes of Mr. T. A. McLachlan at the Royal Academy, the Grosvenor Gallery, and elsewhere. Perhaps his picture in the third room at Burlington House is the finest of these. We have particularly gone out of our way to speak of these works, because Mr. McLachlan stands alone, in our estimation, among our younger men, in attempting to follow the finer traditions of imaginative landscape as interpreted by Crome, Palmer, and Cecil Lawson. At present an over admiration of J. F. Millet in his figures, and a treacherous facility in conception and execution, are apt at times to mar his pictures.

## CENTURY GUILD DESIGN.

House. Cost, £620.

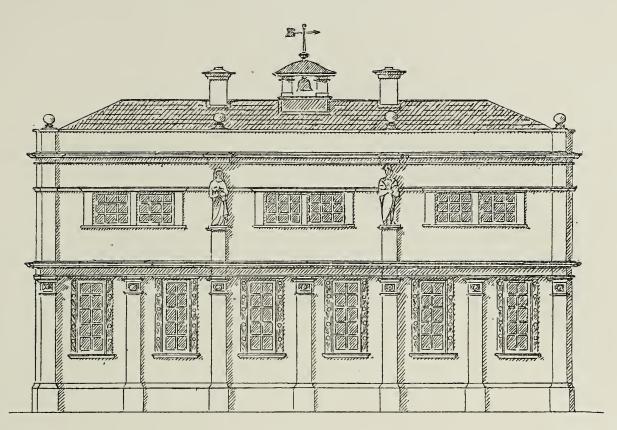
THE Century Guild lays stress upon the fact that all Art makes for the needs of an entire people, and more particularly does it recognize this fact in the case of Architecture.

To bring Architecture within the reach of all is then its especial aim; nor is this very difficult, if in the first place the materials, selected with care, are treated in a workmanlike way; and if, in the second place, the proportions are made artistically valuable.

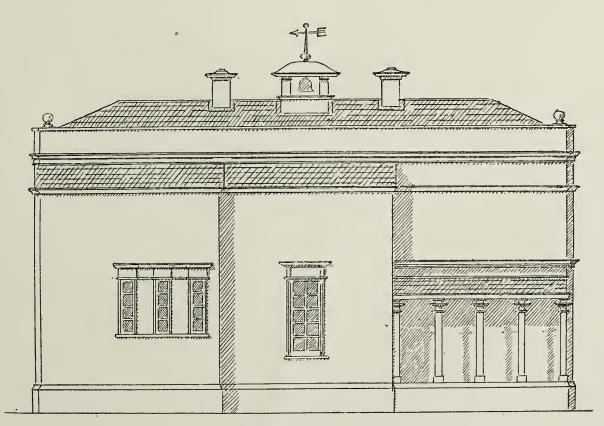
In the case of the present design it has been the endeavour to introduce a certain dignity of treatment and interest of detail into a class of houses which has been, hitherto, left to the suburban Builder to run up as insufficiently and vulgarly as the genius of Commercialism is able.

The lower portion of the house mainly consists of a series of piers which, while concentrating the strength and so facilitating an economy of material, at the same time allows the upper storey to project in such a way as to increase the bed-room space above. And further, this frank treatment of the construction produces a pleasant effect in the elevation.

Round the windows of the ground-floor, and on the capitals of the piers, is a little rich ornament in terra cotta, details of which,



FRONT- ELEVATION



·BRCK · ELEVATION ·

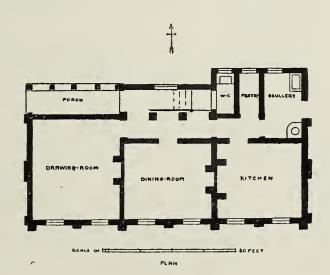
#### CENTURY GUILD DESIGN.

modelled by B. Creswick, a pupil of Mr. Ruskin's, we hope to be able to give later on.

To make the house warmer and to prevent the absorption of wet, the brick walls are coated with cement rough-cast. This, tinted to a pleasant yellow, makes an agreeable harmony with the terra cotta and white mouldings.

The plan was necessarily determined, externally by the aspect and the position, and internally by the requirements of space and arrangement.

In this building, imperfect as it is, it may be seen how practical is the principle of the unity of the arts, and how easy it is to introduce colour and sculpture into the simplest architecture.



# THE CENTURY GUILD WORK.

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WROUGHT IRON WORK:

Mr. Winstanley,

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Bush Hill Park, Enfield, N.

BEATEN AND CHASED BRASS AND COPPER WORK:

Mr. Esling,

At the Agents of the Century Guild.

In drawing attention to our own work, we have added, with their permission, the names of those workers in art whose aim seems to us most nearly to accord with the chief aim of this magazine. Our list at present is necessarily limited, but with time and care we hope to remedy this defect.

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